IN THE CLAIMS

1-8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for establishing an affiliation within a single sign-on system, comprising the steps of:

establishing one or more affiliations of computer-implemented service providers, each affiliation collectively programmed to act as a single entity on a network for purposes of any of authentication, federation, and authorization;

establishing a computer-implemented owner of each said affiliation that is programmed to maintain a list that shows which service providers are members of said affiliation, as well as any control structure or meta-data associated with said affiliation; and

providing a unique identifier for each said affiliation within said single sign-on system in which said affiliation is defined.

~~A method for establishing an affiliation within a single sign-on system, comprising the steps of:~~

~~defining a group of service providers that act as a single entity on a network for purposes of any of authentication, federation, and authorization;~~

~~providing a plurality of principals that can acquire a federated identity and be authenticated and vouched for by an identity provider; and~~

~~providing an identity provider for authenticating and vouching for principals.~~

10. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

each one of multiple principals acquiring a federated identity;

providing an identity provider programmed to authenticate and vouch for said principals.

~~a principal logging into said identity provider;~~

~~said principal visiting a first service provider and federating to said group; and~~

~~said principal then visiting any other service provider within said group.~~

11. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim <u>10,</u> ~~9,~~ further comprising the step<u>s</u> of:

    <u>a principal logging into said identity provider;</u>

    <u>said principal visiting a first service provider and federating to said affiliation; and</u>

    <u>said principal then visiting any other service provider within said affiliation without having to separately federate to said other service providers.</u>

    ~~defining an owner of said affiliation that is responsible for maintaining a list that shows which service providers are members of said affiliation, as well as any control structure or meta-data associated with said affiliation.~~

12. (Canceled)

13. (Original) The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of:

    providing a discovery service for enabling a web service consumer to discover service information regarding a user's personal web services.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of:

    providing a web service consumer associated with a service provider for requesting a service descriptor and assertion for service from said discovery service and for presenting an assertion from said other service provider with affiliate information.

15. (Original) The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of:

said discovery service checking said other service provider affiliation and generating a service assertion based upon said other service provider affiliation.

16. (Original) The method of Claim 15, further comprising the step of:

said web service consumer invoking a service with said service assertion via a web service provider.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, wherein said affiliation ~~group~~ has an identifier that is unique within a single sign-on system in which said affiliation ~~group~~ is defined.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, wherein service providers within a single sign-on system may be members of multiple affiliations, but are programmed to act only ~~groups, but can only act~~ with a single affiliation for any given transaction.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, wherein a user federating with an affiliation ~~a group~~ automatically federates with all members of said affiliation. ~~group.~~

20. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, wherein a user authorizing access to a service by said federation authorizes access to any member of said affiliation. ~~group.~~

21. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of:

providing a unique identifier for every ~~any service provider/group~~ affiliation, and responsive to ~~wherein if~~ a service provider having a service provider identity requesting ~~requests~~ an identity of a user through different ~~group~~ affiliations, said service provider receiving ~~receives~~ different, unique identifiers for each ~~group~~ affiliation.

22. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of:

providing a common ~~same~~ identifier to all members of said affiliation ~~group~~ when they are acting as a part of said ~~group~~ affiliation.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of:

providing an affiliation name identifier for allowing sites to handle an automatic federation that take place with all members of said affiliation. ~~group.~~

24. (New) The method of claim 9, wherein said network comprises:

a web services-based service infrastructure in which users manage sharing of their personal information across identity providers and service providers.

25. (New) The method of claim 24, wherein said web services implement a lightweight protocol for exchange of information in a decentralized, distributed environment, and said protocol comprises an envelope that defines a framework for describing what is in a message and how to process it, a set of encoding rules for expressing instances of application-defined data types, and a convention for representing remote procedure calls and responses.

26. (New) A computer-implemented affiliation system, comprising:

a computer-implemented affiliation of computer-implemented service providers collectively programmed to act as a single entity on a network for purposes of any of authentication, federation, and authorization;

said affiliation including a computer-implemented owner of said affiliation that is programmed to maintain a list that shows which service providers are members of said affiliation, as well as any control structure or meta-data associated with said affiliation; and

wherein said owner is programmed to provide a unique identifier for said affiliation within said single sign-on system in which said affiliation is defined.